

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (CA-47) today applauded the Pentagon's decision to relax enforcement of "don't ask, don't tell," the military's policy that prevents gays and lesbians from serving openly in the military. The new rules, which take effect immediately, would ban investigations into the sexual orientation of service members based on anonymous tips or information gathered during medical care or security reviews. Defense Secretary Robert Gates also announced that low-ranking officers or military members will no longer be able to initiate formal action against gay or lesbian soldiers.

"Repealing 'don't ask, don't tell' is the right thing to do," said Rep. Sanchez, who is the highest ranking female member on the House Armed Services Committee. "We should be recognizing our men and women in uniform for their service, not their sexual orientation.

"The Pentagon's decision to relax its 'don't ask, don't tell' rules is a step in the right direction, and deserves to be recognized as such. But it's not enough. No individual should have to hide who they are to serve their country, which is why Congress needs to repeal 'don't ask, don't tell' once and for all."

Rep. Sanchez has been a longtime opponent of "don't ask, don't tell." During a recent House Armed Services Committee hearing with senior Pentagon officials, she said the U.S. should follow the lead of at least twenty other countries that allow gays and lesbians to serve openly. Rep. Sanchez has pledged to work with our military leaders to implement a policy repeal as quickly and seamlessly as possible.

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